The park is open 24 hours a day, all year. Visitor center hours vary by season: Call 719-378-6399. Entrance fees, $3 per person aged 16 and up, are good for one week. Several park and federal passes are honored: See the park newspaper or check www.nps.gov/grsa.

You can enjoy ranger-led programs and events, go birding, hike, backpack, photograph, stargaze, and more. We strive to make facilities and programs accessible to persons with disabilities. For details ask at the visitor center or ask a park ranger.

Safety
Don’t trust computer road mapping here. The only paved-highway access is via US 160 and CO 150 from the south or US 17 and County Lane 6 from the west. Lightning strikes can be fatal: If you see a thunderstorm, get off the dunes! Storms and cold weather can occur any time of the year. Summer sand surfaces reach 140ºF. Hike dunes in early mornings then. Wear closed-toe shoes and monitor pets’ feet. Elevations range from 7,500 to nearly 14,000 feet: Seek medical advice about doing vigorous exercise. Elevation sickness symptoms are short breath, headache, and nausea. Drink lots of water.

Getting a copy of “Wild Ways” at the visitor center to learn about bears and mountain lions. Store food, toiletries, and trash in bear-proof boxes in campgrounds. Do not feed any wildlife. It is dangerous for you and unhealthy for them.

More Information
Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve
11999 Highway 150
Mosca, CO 81146-9798
719-378-6300
www.nps.gov/grsa

Great Sand Dunes is one of over 390 parks in the National Park System. To learn about national parks and National Park Service programs in America’s communities, please visit www.nps.gov.

Emergencies call 911

More than Sand Dunes
You can explore the mountains, foothills, diverse forests, and grasslands here as well as sand dunes. Groups may reserve free ranger-led programs in advance: Call 719-378-6399.

Origins of the Dunes
This map of the park and preserve shows how wind and water move sand, continually forming dunes. Most sand comes from the San Juan Mountains, over 65 miles to the west. Larger, rougher grains and pebbles come from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains (right). Sand and sediments from both ranges washed into a huge lake once covering the valley floor. As the lake drained, prevailing southwesterly winds (large white arrows) blew sand grains to pile up beneath the Sangre de Cristos or to be washed back toward the valley floor (small blue arrows). Northwesterly winds (small white arrow) blew through mountain passes, piling dunes back on themselves and creating North America’s tallest dunes. Research suggests that the dunes are less than 440,000 years old, but we don’t yet know their exact age.

Medano Creek wave surges (seasonal)
Tall trees, Montville Trail
Sand Creek Lakes area

These are public roads, but please respect private property in the Baca Grande Subdivision.

Exploring the Park from Streams to Summits
This map of the park and preserve shows how wind and water move sand, continually forming dunes. Most sand comes from the San Juan Mountains, over 65 miles to the west. Larger, rougher grains and pebbles come from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains (right). Sand and sediments from both ranges washed into a huge lake once covering the valley floor. As the lake drained, prevailing southwesterly winds (large white arrows) blew sand grains to pile up beneath the Sangre de Cristos or to be washed back toward the valley floor (small blue arrows). Northwesterly winds (small white arrow) blew through mountain passes, piling dunes back on themselves and creating North America’s tallest dunes. Research suggests that the dunes are less than 440,000 years old, but we don’t yet know their exact age.